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UNCLAS KUWAIT 000617

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FOR G, R, NEA/FO, NEA/ARPI, NEA/PPD, NEA/PI, AND IIP

PASS TO PAOS AND MEPI COORDINATORS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [KMPI](#) [KWMN](#) [KU](#) [FREEDOM](#) [AGENDA](#)

SUBJECT: FREEDOM AGENDA: NOVEMBER WOMEN IN BUSINESS CONFERENCE
SUPPORTS MEPI GOALS; U.S. SHOULD TAKE PART

REF: Abu Dhabi 417

11. (U) This is an action request. See para 5.

12. (U) Members of post's MEPI committee met February 21 with organizers of the proposed November 12-14 First Gulf Forum of Women in Business (WiB). Conference coordinator Ahmed Suleiman explained that the non-profit UK-based WiB, founded in 1996 as an annual conference for businesswomen from the UK and Middle East, has become an international forum to bring women together to discuss gender and equality issues and to foster professional exchanges among participants. The 2005 conference in Damascus attracted over 1,200 delegates from 40 countries and previous conferences have enjoyed the participation of heads of government and first ladies from around the world. Additional information is available at .

13. (U) Suleiman said that under the patronage of the GOK and Committee for Women's Affairs, Kuwait would host the Gulf Forum for an audience of 800 and likely include the following workshops:

- The Developing Role of Working Women in the Arab World
- Globalizing the Impact of Women on the Economy
- Developing Human Potential - the Role of Education and Training
- The Art of Marketing and Promoting Your Projects
- Financing and Structuring Business Growth

He inquired about the availability of the First Lady or the Secretary to address conferees. He also welcomed the participation

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of senior American businesswomen.

14. (U) In support of the Forum, post will ensure that participants from MEPI programs are invited. Post will also invite local WiB representatives to brief the regular meeting of the American Business Council to build up support among the resident American business community, which includes many successful women.

15. (U) Action Request: In discussing the First Gulf Forum's goals and objectives, EmbOffs noted considerable compatibility between WiB and MEPI objectives, particularly in the economic and women's pillars. Given some of the challenges of implementing MEPI programs in the Gulf (reftel), post recommends the Department and other agencies support the efforts of WiB, which has already been in touch with MEPI fund recipients such as the Beyster Institute about conference sessions and follow-on activities. Suleiman and his colleagues (Ronnie Middleton, Layla Al-Haji, and Sara Al-Haji) plan to call on EmbOffs at other embassies in the Gulf and post encourages MEPI coordinators to meet with them. WiB representative Kim Thompson will be in the U.S. in April and post recommends a senior-level MEPI meeting. End action request.

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LEBARON